

## Take a Break!

### If your work is mostly on the computer keyboard/mouse...

Take regular breaks from your computer work to reduce

- sore necks and shoulders
- lower back pain
- pain in the hands and/or arms
- headaches
- eye strain

All computer workers will have some of these problems if they work at the computer and mouse for long periods. Regular breaks and gentle exercise can help reduce the problems but you should consult a doctor if problems persist.

Try to alternate computer activities with other work so that you don't spend more than 30 minutes at one time directly on the computer. If possible, the alternate work should involve getting up from your work station and moving around.

Take a *micro-break* for 10-60 seconds every 10 to 15 minutes.

Remove your hands from the keyboard/mouse and let them hang at your side.

Relax and either close your eyes or look off into the distance for a few seconds before returning to work.

### Micro-break exercises

Lower arms so that hands hang at the side, breathing normally. Alternately clench hands (form fist) and relax.

Sit upright but relaxed, arms at side, breathing normally. Gently pull shoulders back and hold for a few seconds. Relax back to original position and repeat several times.

Sit upright but relaxed, arms at side, breathing normally. Gently raise one knee until toe is off the floor and hold for one full breath. Gently return to sitting and repeat on opposite side.

Repeat several times.

Raise your eyes from the keyboard/monitor. Look off into the distance for a count of 10 to allow the eyes to refocus. Close the eyes for a count of ten, and repeat.

Take a longer break of 3 to 5 minutes every half hour, or a break of 7 to 10 minutes every hour. Get up from your work station and move around.

### Gentle exercises for computer workers

**Rolling shoulders:** Stand relaxed with feet apart and breath normally. Slowly raise both shoulders up and forward, let them relax down and back, then repeat for a slow continuous roll. Stop, relax and repeat the exercise in the opposite direction.

**Stretch to the sky:** Breath normally. Slowly raise your arms over your head, gently stretching to stand on your toes. If you are standing in a doorway you can let you fingers 'crawl' up wall above door to extend the stretch.

**Raising the arms:** Stand relaxed with feet apart, arms hanging at the side of the body, and breath normally. Slowly raise both arms in front of body to 'heart height'. Try to raise the arms using the wrists, rather than using the elbows and shoulders. Gently lower the arms back to the side and relax.

Repeat several times.

**Open the chest:** Stand relaxed with feet apart, arms hanging at the side of the body, and breath normally the same as for Raising the arms. Slowly raise both arms in front of body to 'heart height'. Try to raise the arms using the wrists, rather than using the elbows and shoulders.

Once the hands are at heart height, slowly and gently open the arms to the back (shoulder blades move closer together). Gently return the arms to the front, lower them back to the side and relax.

Repeat several times.

**White crane stretches its wings:** Stand relaxed with feet apart and breath normally. Raise the hands in front of the body as if holding a beach ball and relax. Roll the hands to turn the ball until one hand is at the top facing down, and the other at the bottom facing upwards. Slowly and gently extend the top arm above the head and at the same time lower the bottom arm to the opposite side. Gently stretch, then return to holding the imaginary ball. Roll the ball over and stretch to the opposite side.

Repeat several times.

